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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 002931

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [RS](#) [AF](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: INITIAL RUSSIAN REACTION TO AFGHAN STRATEGY
REF: STATE 122731

Classified By: Ambassador John Beyrle for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a December 1 meeting at the MFA, Ambassador Beyrle previewed the President's West Point speech with Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksey Borodavkin and Zamir Kabulov, head of the Second Asia Department. Borodavkin noted that the U.S. and Russia both had a stake in stabilizing Afghanistan and Pakistan and rooting out extremism. Acknowledging that economic development must be a priority, he said Russia was ready to move forward with real cooperation in areas such as infrastructure projects. End Summary.

The New Strategy

¶2. (C) Ambassador Beyrle expressed appreciation for the GOR's support for U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and noted that the U.S. and Russia had convergent national interests in Afghanistan. In previewing the President's speech, per reftel guidance, he stated that the goal of defeating al Qaeda had not changed. Recognizing that the root of the problems in both Afghanistan and Pakistan was largely socio-economic, he highlighted U.S. plans to increase significantly the civilian assistance component of the U.S. contribution along with additional military forces. The Ambassador also emphasized the need for dialogue with partners as a means of achieving success in Afghanistan.

¶3. (C) In response to the Deputy Minister's question about the duration of troop deployments, the Ambassador said additional deployments would not be open-ended. While recognizing that military force would be useful in the short-run to clear the path for economic progress, he said that development would be the key to long-term stability in Afghanistan. The Ambassador also recalled the logistical challenges the U.S. faced in bringing supplies and troops to the region, and expressed appreciation for Russia's air and land transit support.

Future Cooperation

¶4. (C) Borodavkin thanked the Ambassador for the information and for the dialogue between Moscow and Washington on Afghanistan. He acknowledged that defeating al Qaeda and extremist forces in Afghanistan was critical and said Russia supported this goal. Agreeing that the U.S., Russia and the Europeans had mutual interests in Afghanistan, he recalled Russia's USD 200 million support for Afghanistan beginning in ¶2001. This support included military hardware and weapons donations. Although there was speculation that some of the equipment the GOR provided was not usable, Ambassador Kabulov stated that the donations were good quality, but were warehoused because U.S.-made weaponry was a priority for the ANA. Borodavkin said Russia would consider supplying more

weapons to Afghan forces, but would prefer sales to donations. He commented that there was little incentive to develop the market via donations leading to future sales because Afghan forces would be converting to NATO standard equipment in the future. He expressed concern about unlicensed weapons, based on Russians designs, which were being produced in Eastern Europe and purchased by the Afghan government.

15. (C) Borodavkin noted that the GOR also shares our view that economic development and strengthening the security forces were key factors in stabilizing Afghanistan. He questioned how this would work "in the field" and how results would be obtained. Calling for real cooperation, Borodavkin said the GOR was ready to work on projects such as the Salang Tunnel, which had been discussed many times, even by President Medvedev, but had yet to be realized.

16. (C) Borodavkin said that counternarcotics issues were Russia's main concern regarding Afghanistan. He stated that Russia remained ready to assist with training of Afghan counternarcotics forces at the Domodedovo center. Borodavkin criticized as "unconstructive" the U.S. hold on funding for the Domodedovo training programs until Russia agrees to allow two OSCE projects inside Afghanistan. Deflecting the Ambassador's plea to move to a more practical attitude to OSCE involvement in Afghanistan, Borodavkin repeated that Russia did not support such OSCE activities because Afghanistan is not an OSCE member and Russia did not want to see the "OSCE flag in Afghanistan." He also noted that there were comparable training programs in Central Asia as an alternative to the two proposed OSCE programs inside

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Afghanistan's borders.

Regional Support

17. (C) Borodavkin also discussed Russia's efforts to stimulate support for Afghanistan in Central Asia and India. He referred to the March 2009 SCO conference and CSTO efforts in the area of counternarcotics operations. He also noted the July 2009 meeting between President Medvedev and the Presidents of Tajikistan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan as another example of Russia's support for economic development and stability in Afghanistan.

18. (C) Borodavkin also recognized the importance of Pakistan in achieving stability in Afghanistan, stating that instability in Pakistan negatively affects Afghanistan, Russia and the region. Responding to Borodavkin's question about the security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, the Ambassador stated that this is an issue the U.S. monitors closely and we are confident the weapons are under control.

19. (C) Note: The Ambassador's discussions with DFM Borodavkin on North Korea will be reported in septel.
Beyrle